

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for performing an Internet search launched from an instant
2 messaging (IM) application, the method comprising:

3 providing a first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search of a
4 second IM user directly from the IM application;
5 transmitting a search query identifying the second IM user to a search server;
6 searching the Internet for web pages matching the search query to generate
7 search results using the search server;
8 accessing a user profile of the second IM user from an IM member profile
9 database;
10 sorting the search results in order of relevance to information in the user
11 profile of the second IM user; and
12 displaying the sorted search results to the first IM user.

1 2. The method as defined in claim 1 further comprising:
2 providing the first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search from the
3 IM application based on a topic; and
4 transmitting a second search query identifying the topic to the search server.

1 3. The method as defined in claim 2 further comprising:
2 searching the Internet for web pages matching the second search query to
3 generate second search results using the search server; and
4 displaying the second search results to the first IM user.

1 4. The method as defined in claim 2 wherein displaying the search results
2 further comprises displaying the user profile along with the search results.

1 5. The method according to claim 2 wherein providing the first IM user
2 with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM application based on the search
3 query further comprises automatically displaying a string that identifies the second IM user in
4 a dialog box.

1 6. The method according to claim 5 wherein the string is a name that is
2 accessed from an electronic address book.

1 7. The method according to claim 5 wherein the string is a identification
2 number that identifies the user profile.

1 8. The method according to claim 1 wherein transmitting the search query
2 to the search server further comprises transmitting a URL that contains an ID identifying the
3 second IM user to the search server.

1 9. The method according to claim 1 wherein providing the first IM user
2 with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM application further comprises
3 providing a search option on a tool bar or drop down list on a screen displayed by the IM
4 application.

1 10. The method according to claim 1 wherein the sorted search results are
2 displayed in a web browser window generated by a web browser application.

1 11. A computer system for performing an Internet search launched from an
2 instant messaging (IM) application, the computer system comprising:

3 code for providing a first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search
4 of a second IM user directly from the IM application;
5 code for transmitting a search query identifying the second IM user to a search
6 server;

7 code for searching the Internet for web pages matching the search query to
8 generate search results using the search server;

9 code for accessing a user profile of the second IM user from an IM member
10 profile database;

11 code for sorting the search results in order of relevance to information in the
12 user profile of the second IM user;

13 code for displaying the sorted search results to the first IM user; and
14 a computer readable medium for storing the codes.

1 12. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for
2 displaying the sorted search results further comprises displaying the user profile of the second
3 IM user along with the search results.

1 13. The computer system according to claim 12 further comprising:

code for providing the first IM user with an option to launch an Internet search from the IM application based on a topic; and
code for transmitting a second search query identifying the topic to the search server.

14. The computer system according to claim 11 further comprising:
code for searching the Internet for web pages matching the second search query to generate second search results using the search server; and
code for displaying the second search results to the first IM user.

15. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for providing the first IM user with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM application based on the search query further comprises code for automatically displaying a string that identifies the second IM user in a dialog box.

16. The computer system according to claim 15 wherein the string is a name that is accessed from an electronic address book.

17. The computer system according to claim 15 the string is a identification number that identifies the user profile.

18. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for transmitting the search query to the search server further comprises code for transmitting a URL that contains an ID identifying the second IM user to the search server.

19. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the code for providing the first IM user with the option to launch the Internet search from the IM application further comprises code for providing a search option on a tool bar or drop down list on a screen displayed by the IM application.

20. The computer system according to claim 11 wherein the sorted search results are displayed in a web browser window generated by a web browser application.